

POEMS

BRIAN HOOKER



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POEMS

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By BRIAN HOOKER



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LILACS IN THE CITY

Amid the rush and fever of the street,
The snarl and clash of countless quarrelling bells,
And the sick, heavy heat,
The hissing footsteps, and the hateful smells,
I found you, speaking quietly
Of sunlit hill-horizons and clean earth;
While the pale multitude that may not dare
To pause and live a moment, lest they die,
Swarmed onward with hot eyes, and left you
there—
An armful of God's glory, nothing worth.

You are more beautiful than I can know.
Even one loving you might gaze an hour
Nor learn the perfect flow
Of line and tint in one small, purple flower.
There are no two of you the same,
And every one is wonderful and new—
Poor baby-blossoms that have died unblown,
And you that droop yourselves as if for shame,
You too are perfect. I had hardly known
The grace of your glad sisters but for you.

POEMS

You myriad of little litanies !

Not as our bitter piety, subdued
To cold creed that denies

Or lying law that severs glad and good ;
But like a child's eyes, after sleep
Uplifted ; like a girl's first wordless prayer
Close-held by him who loves her—no distress
Nor storm of supplication, but a deep,

Dear heartache of such utter happiness
As only utter purity can bear.

For you are all the robin feels at dawn ;

The meaning of green dimness, and calm noons
On high fields far withdrawn,

Where the haze glimmers and the wild bee croons.
You are the soul of a June night:—

Intimate joy of moon-swept vale and glade,
Warm fragrance breathing upward from the ground,
And eager winds tremulous with sharp delight
Till all the tense-tuned gloom thrills like a sound—
Mystery of sweet passion unafraid.

LILACS IN THE CITY

O sweet, sweet, sweet! You are the proof of all
That over-truth our dreams have memory of
That day cannot recall:

Work without weariness, and tearless love,
And taintless laughter. While we run
To measure dust, and sounding names are hurled
Into the nothingness of days unborn,
You hold your little hearts up to the sun,
Quietly beautiful amid our scorn—
God's answer to the wisdom of this world.

BALLADE OF THE DREAMLAND ROSE

Where the waves of burning cloud are rolled
On the further shore of the sunset sea,
In a land of wonder that none behold,
There blooms a rose on the Dreamland Tree
That stands in the Garden of Mystery
Where the River of Slumber softly flows;
And whenever a dream has come to be,
A petal falls from the Dreamland Rose.

In the heart of the tree, on a branch of gold,
A silvern bird sings endlessly
A mystic song that is ages old,
A mournful song in a minor key,
Full of the glamour of faery;
And whenever a dreamer's ears uncloze
To the sound of that distant melody,
A petal falls from the Dreamland Rose.

BALLADE OF THE DREAMLAND ROSE

Dreams and visions in hosts untold
Throng around on the moonlit lea:
Dreams of age that are calm and cold,
Dreams of youth that are fair and free—
Dark with a lone heart's agony,
Bright with a hope that no one knows—
And whenever a dream and a dream agree,
A petal falls from the Dreamland Rose.

ENVOI

Princess, you gaze in a reverie
Where the drowsy firelight redly glows;
Slowly you raise your eyes to me. . . .
A petal falls from the Dreamland Rose.

A SITUATION

Not that I mean to make trouble. . . . All the same,
I could reach him so easily, easily—just one glance,
One word sometimes, to awaken the whole romance—

It's enough to tempt a Minerva to play the game . . .
And she so careful never to give me a chance!

He's a younger cousin, or some relation of hers;
(She's older than I) and the two are really friends,
Equal, intimate comrades—and there it ends:
Never a thought of anything better or worse,
And nearly the same with me, but . . . that
depends.

No one I want—just a big, dear, innocent boy
With a man's blunt will and elaborate honesties,
And the arms and back of a man, and sweet boy's
eyes
Easily brightened with laughter or darkened with
joy—
Inexperienced, eager, and not too wise!

Nothing to rouse me deeply, or hold me long—
I have buried my dead, and seen my share of men—
But the wish comes back upon me again and again
To awaken the man in the boy, and find him
strong . . .
And a horrible sick little shudder now and then,

A SITUATION

As he sits with his hand on hers, as a matter of course,
Or sprawls on the floor with his head against her
knee

Wholly unconscious, forgetting the He and She,
Which somehow, nevertheless, has a subtle force
When their wills or opinions oppose and their eyes
agree.

If she would only not be quite so motherly!
Patronizingly watching us day by day—
When his eyes follow on as I move, and rest where
I stay,
Or his voice drops half a tone below the brotherly—
Off goes the conversation another way!

As if she said: "Come look at my lovely flowers—
Please do not pluck any; I never do, you know,
Only I like to plant them and watch them grow". . .
If the two were boy and girl in their first mad hours,
I should laugh, and help them, and bless them, and
let them go!

And yet . . . What a foolish waste there will be of
beauty
When he finds the one conventional child for him,
(With an untaught voice, and elbows youthfully
slim)
Who follows him stupidly down the path of duty,
So blind with her own new glory that his grows
dim!

POEMS

To make him take me, knowing myself the first—
I who could measure his utmost power of giving,
I who could prize his virginal believing,
I who have learned the lore of the best and worst . . .
Why, it would make the life I have lived worth
living!

Only—have I still anything left to spare?
Well, an education in love, to the last degree,
Is cheap at the price of a shrivelled vanity.
I at least ought to think so—I've had my share.
Not that I mean to make trouble, but . . . we
shall see.

A LITTLE PERSON

Sunny hair and eyes of wonder,
Baby-lips apart,
Vivid mother-breast, whereunder
Laughs a childish heart—
What have you to do with learning
Wiser bliss or woe?
Take our gold; the cost of earning
You shall never know.

You shall joy as for another,
Find it strange to weep,
Play at being wife and mother,
Dream, and fall asleep;
All we toil for, all we doubt of,
All we yearn to see,
All our hopes have sneered us out of—
You shall prove, and be.

You shall purify deceiving
With a glad disdain,
Beautifully unbelieving
Meet the eyes of pain,
Dance through hells undreamed-of, bringing
Benefits unguessed:
Unto shame, a sound of singing,
Unto passion, rest.

POEMS

Sunny hair and eyes of wonder,
 Baby-lips apart,
Vivid mother-breast, whereunder
 Laughs a childish heart,
Soul unsinful, unforgiven,
 Voice of dawn and dew—
God one morning, glad of heaven,
 Laughed—and that was you!

ONEIROS

Out of the hush and darkness of deep sleep

Your face came toward me: first a nebulous gleam
Like some dim star beheld with eyes that weep;

Then wavering nearer in a misty flame,
As the moon falters up through some dark stream

When the wind moves at midnight. With you came

A breath of music, faint and far away,
And light and music somehow seemed the same:

The one, all hope that longing turns to fear;
The other, all men dream and dare not say.

Slowly the brightness broadened, and drew near,

And orb'd into the wonder of your face;
While the sound swelled and echoed trembling-clear—
The minor dominant of a wild desire
Beating the sullen bars of time and space;

And with your coming, ever the sound rose higher,
Quivering with extremity of sweet,

And I could see your eyes; and the dim fire
That framed your face became your golden hair
Falling in streams of Summer to your feet;

POEMS

And the wild melody shook earth and air,
You ever drawing closer, till at last
Music and brightness grew too great to bear—
Then suddenly the yearning cadence caught
The chord it longed for, and I held you fast.

Then the dream changed. Heavy with heat and
fraught
With sighs of slumbering roses, hung the gloom
Over us. Little breezes passed, and caught
Sweetness from bower and flower, and wandered
on
Through murmuring groves and beds of hidden
bloom.

Hard by, a marble palace rose, that shone
With pearly balconies and columns tall
Sprayed into arch like fountains turned to stone;
And from a lower window deep-embayed
Two bars of yellow light shot forth, to fall

On your white dress and shining head, and made
A saint of you, and passed unwillingly,
Paling to amber where they half displayed
Mysterious gardens darkling down to meet
The starlit laughter of the distant sea.

ONEIROS

Down with the light swept the swift-pulsing beat
Of eager music, and the yellow bars
Were shaken and shaded as the flying feet
Of dancers crossed the light. All throbbed in
time—
The music, and our hearts, and the hot stars.

Woes of dead lovers in an ancient rhyme,
Deeds of dead heroes when the world was young,
Strife of great souls that vainly strove to climb
Steeps of sheer joy where only angels tread—
Ached in that music, finding heart and tongue.

And the old childhood feelings I thought dead
Came back upon me, seeming strange and new:
Love of I knew not what, and causeless dread,
And vague desire; all old things passed away
Returned fulfilled, and all found form in you.

Under a huge dim-towering tree I lay,
You bending over me. I knew my sight
Had never fallen on your face by day—
Yet had I known you well, and sought you long,
Loved in forgotten dreams for many a night;

POEMS

And you were soft and dear, like an old song,
And strange as moonlit clouds. Love strung to
pain
Tightened your cheek, and made your breath grow
long
And your lips brighten. Tears were in your
eyes,
And in your hair, the scent of Summer rain.

And as I held you close, we seemed to rise
And float away over the waves of sound;
And all things but ourselves were fantasies:
Death an old lie; and Life an empty quest;
And Time a blind mole burrowing underground.

Then our eyes drew you down. Your warm lips
pressed
On mine with eager kisses: all the dark
Was full of you: through your quick-panting breast
I felt your heart slow beating against my own
Like the heat-pulses in a dying spark—

Then the dream faded. Like a petal blown
From some tall flower, you floated down—your
whole
Love in your eyes, and your white arms up-thrown—
Blurred to a hazy glimmer far withdrawn,
So faint I only seemed to see your soul,

ONEIROS

Faded, and flashed, and vanished. . . . And the dawn
Burst in upon me, and I woke. Yet still
Truth seemed a shadow of the dream foregone;
And all brave hopes, your glamour cast before;
And all good thoughts, the echo of your will.

And still you help me. Shall we meet once more,
Out of the hush and darkness of deep sleep,
In the day-world's tempestuous toil and war?
And if I find you . . . will you ever be
As the warm firelight of my home to me,
Or some dim star beheld with eyes that weep?

A BALLAD OF SIN

A King there was, both good and great,
That was lord of a fair country;
And a certain man within his realm
Did scorn to the King's majesty.

For he paid no tribute to the King,
And he laughed away the law of the land,
And day by day did rob and slay
By craft of heart or might of hand.

The King said: "He hath broke my law
And in my realm done evilly;
Yet, lest some need have driven him,
He shall have gold and lands in fee."

He took the King's good lands and gold,
And squandered all in foolish wise;
For he pledged the lands and spent the gold,
On courtesans and courtesies.

The King said: "He hath lost my gifts,
And spent my goods in harlotry;
Yet folly may be force unyoked—
He shall have men to fight for me."

A BALLAD OF SIN

He took the soldiers of the King,
And led them forth to burn and kill,
And ever his Lord's own banner bore
To show he wrought by the King's will.

The King said: "He hath shamed my crown,
And stained my name with villainy;
Yet . . . treason is but want of faith—
He shall have eyes that he may see."

The man rode forth one summer morn
Across a black and barren land,
And a girl-child stood in his way
Holding a white rose in her hand.

The child laughed up in the man's eyes,
And held her rose for him to take.
He smiled a stale smile, and passed by—
She wept as if her heart would break.

Then the King grieved, saying: "Alas,
That my realm harbour such as he!
There is no more that I may give,
For now he hath dishonoured Me."

ECHOES

In the old room, when May is ending,
And day descending in the West,
Into a golden stillness blending
My memories of worst and best,

Yesterday clings about to-morrow,
Flinging a charm on time and place,
Till calm lights and pale shadows borrow
Frail outlines of your vivid face;

And your voice calls from wall and rafter,
Out of the long-forgotten years—
A song that sorrow follows after,
A laughter tremulous with tears.

PLUS ULTRA

Love, while our love was yet unborn,
And your lips, doubting you, denied
Gifts that should make you glorified
In revelation won and worn—
Still in your virgin eyes I knew
God's promise of the joy of you
Beyond your anger to subdue,
Your maidenhood to hide.

Now, when your lips have granted all
Glory that may be dreamed or done
Between the courses of the sun,
In nature's deep confessional,—
I see, where wonder underlies
The wisdom of your wifely eyes,
Unmasterable mysteries
That never may be won.

FORSITAN

Labour for Love; thy labour shall be vain.

Conquer it; God shall laugh, and feed thee dust.

Deserve it; thou shalt clasp a broken trust,
Learning a wise unfaith. For joy or pain
Love falleth wantonly, as falls the rain
Alike upon the just and the unjust.

Take all unclean that lieth to thine hand—

There is no shame but wherewith Love may be.

Be pure—thou fool, what shall it profit thee?

Thine uttermost endeavour may command
Upon the shore a grain the less of sand,
A drop the more of water in the sea.

Because the heart of Love is hidden higher

Than ever poet sang or prophet saw,

Beyond all dream of glory and of awe,—

The very holiness of thy desire

Shall blind thee to the gold within the fire,

And hold thee from the best. This is the law.

Therefore deserve; give wholly; do no ill;

Labour, and overcome. So the one kiss

May overflow a greater soul with bliss

More curiously sought; or, if Chance will

Thou shalt, remembering old beauty, still

Worthily suffer, knowing what Love is.

WOMANHOOD

Love to a lady said that kneeled before him,
Fain of his light and of his glory fain:
“Who ask of Love must manifold restore him
For little joy, long pain.”

Swiftly she answered: “Lord, put forth thy power.”
(O, and the wonder of her lips and eyes!)
“Let me know all. So I but have mine hour,
What matter for the price?”

Love laughed, and blessed her, saying: “The full
measure
Of all my sweet I give thee utterly;
And in thy pain a joy beyond all pleasure,
Seeing it comes of me.”

GOLDEN-EYES

Strange, that the thing I am should know
The fulness and the perfect flower
Of that old self, long lives ago! . . .
—It must be, when the flesh has died,
The soul turns sunward a new side,
And old lights darken. So that hour
By its own soul-fire glimmers through—
I wrought such glory out of you
As death was frail to overpower!

I was just entering the hall
To greet my captive. . . . All before
Blurs into gloom beyond recall—
Until I see you standing there,
The slant light maddened in your hair,
And in your eyes no fear. Once more
I breathe deep, hear my scabbard ring
On the brown stones, and feel the sting
Of the salt breeze through the high door.

I claimed you mine. You railed, and scoffed.
—Your lover must be near at last—
And all the while, I thought how soft
That grand white breast of yours would feel
Close-crushed against my linked steel. . . .

GOLDEN-EYES

You laughed. A sudden passion-blast
Shook all my blood into one fire,
And in a glory of desire
I caught at you, and held you fast.

Under my kisses and my strength
You raved. Almost I feared you, when
You tried to blind me. Then, at length,
You changed: the hero-mother rose
Into your golden eyes; close, close
You held me, kissed me once—and then
Folk shouted, and a trumpet blew
Loudly. I reeled forth, drunk with you,
To struggle in the press of men.

They must have slain me in that fight.
There was a ship with a high prow,
And a man's face, foam-lipped and white. . . .
Then the veil falls, and leaves me—here:
Worthless, with none to hold me dear,
No quiet hand upon my brow—
I am but half a man alone! . . .
And you, that once were all my own,
Ah, Golden-Eyes, where are you now?

FRAGRANCES

When you pass by me swiftly,
For a moment all the air
Thrills with the breath of your passing
And the summer of your hair.

So, in the dark and the distance,
There comes between sigh and sigh
A breeze and a breath of beauty,
As the thought of you drifts by.

EVERYMAN'S EPITAPH

Listen: I knew in life and breath
Your darkest void, your purest flame;
For I have loved, and smiled at death,
And I have feared, alone with shame.

Therefore this word I leave with you
Who flush and faint as I have done:
*Doubt not that all good things are true,
And the world fair to live upon.*

FOOLS' WISDOM

You thought you loved me, Dear—until you read
In me what Love was; then That Other came
Who won your knowledge. So your dream was dead,
And my reality was put to shame.

It is a bitter thing to have no worth,
To pour oneself out utterly, in vain;
But—these things are of earth, and turn to earth:
The lamp of pleasure and the shade of pain.

“Be wise and manly; leave such thoughts alone.”
The wise ones of this world laugh Love away,
Criticise God, and play with bits of stone—
I do not wish to be as wise as they;

Only to love you perfectly, and wait,
Nor stain with any doubt our joy to be.
Never is but to-morrow. When we mate,
Dear, we shall still have all eternity.

BALLADE OF FAREWELL

New roads to fare, new toils to overthrow,
New fields, made rich with fern and floweret,
And beckoning seas where brave winds merrily blow
Over the sun-bright waves of dawn—and yet,
Never one sun rose but another set. . . .
Wherefore, beseech you, count me not as they
Who shun the venture and avoid the fray,
Though I should pause within the empty hall,
By the old hearth bow down to dream and pray,
And bid at last a long farewell to all.

Dim elms deepen the summer gloom below,
Tangling the drowsy breeze in a soft net
Of slowly waving leaves; an amber glow
Streams out of many windows, over wet
Green grass, gray tower, and vine-hung parapet;
And careless gusts of song start up, and stray
Among the shadows; the city's distant bray
Softens; and happy voices clash and call
One to another, as I turn away,
And bid at last a long farewell to all.

BALLADE OF FAREWELL

Youth, and high hearts welcoming friend and foe,
Careless of fear or failure; the clear jet
And rainbow-spray of joyance; and the flow
Of easy slumber to a morning met
Blithely, fresh-eyed; madrigal, canzonet,
Drink with glad boys and dance with maidens gay,
Scorn of such laws as weaker souls obey—
Carouse, adventure, dalliance, tryst, and brawl—
Must we disown the sweetness of their sway,
And bid at last a long farewell to all?

These things are ebbing from us: and although
It is more wise to frolic than to fret,
Good to strew garlands on the grave of woe,
Good to drink deep of laughter, and forget
Weariness, and chill twilights, and the debt
Inexorable that even we must pay
Who in the House of Life rejoice to stay—
Nevertheless, we find the banquets pall,
See the leaves wither, and the lights turn gray,
And bid at last a long farewell to all.

POEMS

Wherefore, with half my days foregone, I go
Now to begin true labour. I regret
Only the song unborn, the unbent bow
Whose quarry leaps unscathed. Nor dare I let
My heart shrink from the turmoil and the sweat;
For even already have I seen decay
The glamour and dew-freshness of the May,
And felt a weary body faint and fall,
Remembering how I must fear delay,
And bid at last a long farewell to all.

ENVOI

Princes of Mirth! Let no power disarray
The pageants and fair trappings of our play,
Until we turn our faces to the wall,
Smile down the glimmering slopes of yesterday,
And bid at last a long farewell to all.

New Haven, 1909.

THE WHITE CAT: A FAIRY-POEM

THE WHITE CAT: A FAIRY-POEM

There was a King's Son, once upon a time,
Dwelling in a fair country, far away
Even on the other side of Fairyland,
Beyond the mountains and the sea. Through all
His young life, he had never sought in vain,
But what he asked was given; yet none the less
The King's Son was not happy. Day by day,
The King his father, that had been himself
A king's son, gave him horse and hawk and hound,
And taught him to ride straight and keep his spear
Sharp, and his armour shining, to be strong
In war, and swift upon the hunt, and wise
In judgment, honouring the law. The Queen
His mother, that had been a princess, gave him
Silks and gems, a warm hearth and a soft bed,
A table rich with spices and old wine,
Red gold and ready servants; and taught him how
To speak fair, understanding women's eyes,
And sing sweet songs, charming the hearts of men,
And be a prince in all. And his old nurse,
That once had been a fairy in her youth—
A brown and twisted witch like a dead tree—
Gave him a great white cat, that all day long
Drowsed in the sun or dozed before the fire,
With emerald eyes half shut, and paws turned in,

POEMS

Nor ever purred nor rubbed against his knee—
But when the King's Son called her beautiful,
Yawned, and looked elsewhere. And she told him
tales

Of elves and giants, wizards, trolls, and gnomes,
And sleepless dragons, breathing flame, that kept
Watch over hidden gold, and spellbound kings,
And lone princesses in enchanted towers—
Wonderful stories out of Fairyland,
With all the sorry parts left out of them.
And yet the King's Son was not happy. True,
He sang and laughed, rode merrily to the hunt,
And sat in council proudly. Yet he lacked
In all these, what should prove a use for all—
A cause for fight, a dream behind the song—
And having all things, wanted—Everything.

Now, it befell that while the King's Son slept
One sweet midsummer midnight in the gloom
Of his high chamber, the White Cat, that crawled
Mousing amid the shadows, touched his hand
In passing, and at the touch the King's Son sighed
And stirred, opening his eyes. The moonlight fell
Through leaves that breathed about his window, and
lay

In two broad bars athwart the chamber floor;
And between sleep and waking he beheld
A milk-white Princess out of Fairyland
Dancing under the moonbeams, glad as youth,

THE WHITE CAT: A FAIRY-POEM

Beautiful as the memory of a dream,
And sweet as hope. Her eyes were like the dawn;
Her hair was like the twilight; and she moved
Like music over water. And the King's Son
Looking upon her, felt his whole heart break
For wonder and great love. Then suddenly,
Ere he could move or speak, a shadow crossed
The light, and a breeze brushed the leaves, and blew
Balm from the drowsy gardens, and passed by;
And the Prince, gazing where his joy had been,
Saw only emptiness. And while he watched,
Forth from the shadow stole the great White Cat,
And yawned, stretching her claws out one by one,
And shook her ears, and turned, and walked away
Waving her plummy tail aloft in air.

But on the morrow, the Prince came before
His father and his mother, saying:

“ Now

That I am one-and-twenty, and a man,
It is full time I proved your gifts to me
Upon some high endeavour; for I live
As a fat hawk here, or a pampered hound,
Doing all things with cause for doing none,
Useless. But last night, waking suddenly
And wavering on the brink of sleep, I saw
Where the broad moonbeams fell from wall to wall,
A milk-white Fairy Princess dancing there,
Beautiful as the memory of a dream,

POEMS

And sweet as hope. Her eyes were like the dawn;
Her hair was like the twilight; and she moved
Like music over water. And I knew,
Gazing upon her, that my life was hers.
And I shall follow her to Fairyland
And find her, and possess her, or I die."

And the King answered:

"This is but a dream,
Such as young blood dreams in the summer. Nay,
By thine own speech I know it for a dream—
Moon-maidens dancing! Use and uselessness!—
Bide here till harvest, when our foemen spring
Out of the south, ten thousand spears: that war
Shall find thee use enow. Nevertheless,
If thou must ride a-dreaming, take my sword.
I won my kingdom with it years ago,
But it shall never win thee thy desire."

And the Queen cried, clutching her mother-heart
With one white hand:

"Child, there has fallen a spell
Upon thee. Thou hast slept under the moon,
And that breeds madness. Bide thou here, and let
Wise doctors wash this vapour from thy brain.
Are there no maids in our own country? Still,
If thou must go a-maying, take my harp—
I won my treasure with it, years ago,
Yet it shall never charm thee to thy dream."

THE WHITE CAT: A FAIRY-POEM

Lastly the old Nurse drew from out her breast
A dingy mirror, cracked and stained, set round
With dull gold and dim gems, muttering:

“ Take this;
For they who seek in vain through Fairyland
Their hearts’ desire, perish. Do I not know?
I was dead once, and saw my life therein—
Yet . . . it shall never show thee thine own face.”

But the King’s Son, scarce heeding their dark
speech
For the light of his dream within him, took the gifts,
And called for horse and arms, and rode away
Singing, across the sunshine. And the White Cat
That drowsed on the warm stones beside the door,
Twisting her lazy body in the sun,
Rose up, and ran before him upon his way,
And would not stay behind, nor be denied.

So the King’s Son rode forth, following his dream
Over bright meadows merry with flower and bee,
And through cool woods holy with moss and fern,
Even to the utmost borders of the world,
Beyond the mountains and the sea. And still
The White Cat went before, nor ever turned
To look on him, nor paused, nor gave a sign
Of watching that he followed, but went on
As one that fared alone at her own will,

POEMS

And pointed out his way. But when they came
To the huge wall of gold that guards the bounds
Of Fairyland, its glimmering length flung far
From dawn to sundown, and the gates aflame
With amethyst and opal, whereupon
Is written in a tongue old as the world:
"Who enters here must seek his heart's desire"—
And overhead, hung by a single hair,
A great sword shines and swings, trembling—she
 stayed;
And would not pass there till he went before,
Then followed. And the King's Son, entering, rode
Through a glad country bright with sun, and fair
With blossoms that before his charger's feet
Sprang up, and shed their fragrance, and fell down
Fading behind him; and the low skies burned
Purple and rose and saffron, as if the dawn
Lingered and flushed the noonday; and the trees
Reached forth green arms to him, and brushed his
 cheek
Like soft hands; and the breeze behind him shook
With whispers, and in front through the warm green,
White breasts flashed, and dark eyes glanced, and a
 sound
Of girlish laughter fled from tree to tree;
And the sweet air sang in his blood like wine.
And the King's Son, riding, unslung his harp,
And sang across the summer and the sun:

THE WHITE CAT: A FAIRY-POEM

*“ Youth rides forth to-day!
Lads of mettle rare,
Ladies debonair—
Will ye say him nay?
Joy shall dance and play,
Love shall clasp and cling,
Through the glad array
Of his following.*

*“ Over earth and air
Flows the fire of spring,
Filling everything,
Thrilling everywhere;
Shall a world so fair,
Calling, be denied?
Bid him dare to dare—
Bid him mount and ride!*

*“ Round him in a ring
Gather glorified—
Every maid a bride,
Every man a king—
Wreaths and roses fling
Down his conquering way;
Laugh and kiss and sing—
Youth rides forth to-day!”*

POEMS

And as the song closed, all around broke out
A clapping of tiny hands, and all the air
Filled with soft cries of pleasure; and he felt
About his neck the clasp of invisible arms,
And touch of bodiless lips upon his own;
And shimmering winds flashed by, and caught his
 cloak

And tugged his bridle. Only the White Cat
Beside his stirrup paid no heed, but yawned,
Curving her pink tongue, and looked elsewhere. Then,
Far off a solitary trumpet rang
From that which, glittering on the distant hills,
Blazed like a lesser sun. Whither the Prince,
Following his viewless guides across the plain
Deep-spread with bloomy fragrance, was aware
Of a tall castle all of glittering glass,
Whose towers the clouds encrimsoned, and whose base
The earth tinged living green; and its whole breadth
Broke diamond-like into a myriad lights
Of wall and buttress, porch and parapet,
Cornice and battlement and balcony,
And clustered columns branching into arch
Like frozen spray; and the slant lights, and lines
Tangled, and the clear substance of it all,
So mazed his vision that he rode half blind
Before the glare thereof, nor might discern
The outer from the inner. But he saw,
High on a fretted balcony that hung
In one broad band of fire from tower to tower,

THE WHITE CAT: A FAIRY-POEM

A pearl-white Princess crowned with gold, and robed
In purple. And her eyes were like the day;
Her hair was like the summer; and she moved
Like sunshine on the sea. And leaning down,
She stretched her arms toward him, and cried his
name,

Saying:

“ I weary of the brightness here.

Come.”

And with that, the King's Son gave one cry,
Recognizing the vision of his dream,
And spurred his charger to the gate, and seized
The golden horn that hung there, and breathed deep,
Then blew.

Slowly the drawbridge creaked and swung,
Descending; the portcullis rose; the gates
Opened, and down that shining pathway strode
A monstrous giant, all in golden arms,
Demanding what he sought; whereto the Prince:

“ Do battle for the Princess prisoned there.”

So the twain rushed together, while above,
The Princess on her balcony laughed loud,
And called, cheering them on; and the White Cat,
That in the midmost branches of an elm
Clung bristling, like a ball of thistledown,
Hissed angrily. And the Giant heaved on high
His mace, and at the first stroke, stooping, swung
Against the charger's feet, and swept him down

POEMS

Sidelong beneath his rider, as the scythe
Topples the standing corn. But the King's Son
Leaped clear, and found foothold, and sprang within
The swing of the huge mace upon him; and then,
Mindful at once of many a fairy tale—
How giants all are weakest at the knee—
And gathering his whole might into one stroke,
Stabbed. And the Giant roared aloud, and swung
Tottering a moment, then clanged down. His shield
Boomed like a gong, and the ground under him
Rang hollow, smitten by his golden arms,
As though the earth were golden; and the sound
Rolled bellowing from beneath, and jarred afar
In subterranean thunder, and rumbled away
Beyond the horizon. So the Giant fell,
And heaved and groaned a moment, and lay still.

And the King's Son, amazed to have won the quest
So easily, dizzy with joy, and strong
In the surety of his triumph, turned, and strode
Over the drawbridge, through the fiery arch
Of those high gates, and crossed the echoing hall,
And climbed the glassy stairway, where his dream
Waited him. And he knelt before her feet.
And kissed her hand, murmuring:

“Lo, I have come,
Having seen thee and sought thee. Therefore follow
me
Home to my father's kingdom.”

THE WHITE CAT: A FAIRY-POEM

And she said,
Smiling into his eyes:

“Wherefore?”

She seemed
Rosier than he had seen her in his dream,
And sturdier. Nevertheless his whole heart burned
For rapture of her, and he rose, and flung
His arms out, saying:

“I have fought, and slain
The Giant.”

And she laughed, answering:

“What then?”

He is my Giant.”

And at that, the Prince,
Empty of words and sick with a strange fear,
Stood wavering, while the fabric of his dream
Dissolved around him. At the last, he said
Foolishly, hating the sound of his own speech:

“It is not so in any fairy tale.”

But while he spoke, the White Cat from beneath
Cried warning; and he turned, and looking down
Through glassy walls and floors, suddenly beheld
The fallen Giant spring up, and rush within;
And the halls resounded with him, ere he came
Upon them, howling with laughter, and upswung
His massy mace, and with one huge blow shattered
The King's sword, and crushed down the King's Son.

POEMS

Then

The Princess and the Giant lifted him,
And spoiled him of his arms, and bound him fast
With golden chains, and prisoned him far down
In a dim dungeon underneath the moat,
As far below the green earth as from thence
Even to the pinnacle of the tallest tower;
And there, barren of sense and strength, he lay.

All day the White Cat, wandering forlorn
Around the enchanted castle, sought in vain
Her master; for her eyes, fitted for gloom
Where men's eyes fail them, shrank from sun, and
where

The glassy fortress reared its glittering height,
Saw neither wall nor tower nor any form
Nor substance: only a blind golden glare
Unbearable. But when the sun sank down
And the lights paled, rising, and rosily
Flushed, lingering on the battlements, and night
Fell, she crept forward very carefully
To the moat's edge, and looking downward, saw
Through fathoms of wan water and clear glass
Where he lay, chained and prisoned. At that sight,
She raised a dolorous cry, and would have gone
To him, but shrank back frightened at the touch
Of the chill water. And the King's Son heard
Her wailing through his swoon, and seemed to hear

THE WHITE CAT: A FAIRY-POEM

The Princess crying to him for help; and so
Waking, looked up through glassy wall and floor
To a bright banquet chamber, where the twain,
Crowned with red gold and garlanded with flowers,
Feasted, Princess and Giant, laughing wild
And sporting amorously; and his own arms
Hung with a hundred others on the wall:
Whereto they raised their cups, and pledged each
other,

Embracing, and drank deep. Thereupon the Prince,
Feeling his whole strength beaten back on him
In one dry gust of agony, sprang, and brake
The chains whose links fell, tinkling goldenly
Like small bells; and he leaped upward, and swam
Through glassy walls and floors as a diver climbs
Through water, labouring, and won forth, and fled
Headlong, dishonoured and disarmed, his sword
Gone, and his charger slain, and his dead dream
Festering within him. Only his harp remained,
And the dull mirror at his girdle hung,
And the White Cat, following him silently,
Whereof he noted nothing, but rushed on
Through glooms odorous with drowsy blossoms, whose
breath

Seemed like her hair, and winds that cooled his brow
Like her hands, and still lights that shone afar
Most like her eyes whom he had found in vain,
The Princess; and her face was everywhere
Before him, beautiful with joy, and warm

POEMS

With tenderness; and ever by her side
The golden Giant grinned, and pawed her hair
And pinched her cheek, while she laughed up, and lay
Surrendering. And the burden of that sight
So bore upon him that he took no heed
Of place or way or distance, but plunged on
Through the void night beset with evil dreams,
Hopeless, across the immeasurable plain.

But when the dawn came, and a cold light spread
Over the hills behind them, the King's Son
Paused on a westering rise, looking behind
Across the levels toward the light; and where
The glassy keep had reared its glittering towers,
Saw only emptiness and wavy lines
Against the sunrise, like the air that swims
Above a flame, or formless glints that fleck
The edges of a crystal. All between
Lay the broad valley veiled in shimmering mist
From hill to hill. And the keen wind blew clear
The meshes of his mind, and night and shame,
Battle, Giant and Princess, and all else
Bitterly remembered, for a moment seemed
A nightmare whence awake he felt no more,
Wondering to find himself so free from pain
And breathing deep of rest. Then, seeing himself
Horseless and swordless and unarmed, the weight
Of his remembered sorrow fell again,

THE WHITE CAT: A FAIRY-POEM

Yet lightlier; for that clear breath left him still
Doubting; and with that thought, the shimmering
mist

That brimmed the valley overflowed, and rose
Over him; and he turned and went on, folded
Fathoms deep in a cool cloud, overhead
Faint-flushed with sunrise, and beneath tinged wan
By the green earth, and whitening all around
So that he seemed buried in a huge pearl
Wherethrough all things loomed formless, rock and
tree

Shadows, himself a shadow, and the White Cat
A shadow upon a shadow. So he fared
Sightless for many days, knowing not where
Nor whither, save that the ground swelled in hills
And sank in hollows, growing hour by hour
Rough travelling, yet it seemed the general trend
Led upward. And the whiteness all the while
Wavered with wreathy shapes that fled before
Or brushed beside him, or above leaned down
Whispering, and plucked his sleeve and pressed him
on,

Bringing with them a momentary breath
Of bloom or blush of colour. Yet he took
Small heed of them for the increasing toil
Of journey, and the trouble of his brain
Unravelling all his deeds: he should have stayed
And stabbed the fallen Giant; or escaped
Battle, and seeking entrance by some wile,

POEMS

Have slain him sleeping; or in that last bout
Fought harder, and prevailed; or at the end
Fallen upon them ere he fled, and slain
Both, or himself have perished; or perchance
If he had done some evil on the way,
Or broke some law of Faery, whence himself
Was cursed, and his quest barren; and in all
Lurked the arch-doubt, whether in very truth
The princess were his Princess even so,
Or whether having seen her in vision at first
Gave him true right to seek and win her. So
He toiled through clouds, following the land, nor
cared

Whither nor wherefore. And the White Cat ran
A white shadow beside him, making no sign
Of service, but went forward silently
As one that fared by her own will.

At length,
Clambering a rocky slope interminable,
He reached the height, and paused, and standing
there

Fronted a firm wind, and the mist fell, blown
Asunder, and the stars shone. All around,
Vast mountains bulked against an ebony sky
League beyond league, crested with snow, and floored
With sea-green pines; as though the almighty deep,
Heaving his foamy legions to the war
Of the four winds, hung suddenly motionless—
A storm in stone; and the moon, shining down

THE WHITE CAT: A FAIRY-POEM

Through ripply streams of cloud that warmed from
pearl

To amber around her, silvered the long swells
Of peak and pine, and carved in jetty shade
The forms of crag and canyon, precipice
And fissure, gorge and ridge and chasm, and swept
The hollow vales with mystery. And the Prince
Gazed through crystalline space, breathing the air
Of balsamed groves; and his fears fell away
Blown leeward, and his faith cleared, and his dream
Shone forth once more new-born before him. Then,
Far away thrilled a lilt of delicate song
From that which, glimmering on a silvern ridge,
Gleamed like a larger moon. And the King's Son,
Plunging through fresh glooms of the piny dell
And laboring up the further slope, was ware
Of a pale palace all of glimmering ice,
Whose domes the moon illumined, and whose walls
The forest fringed with deepening green. Behind,
A still lake held the clouds; in front, the trees
Crusted with frost, shot forth a million fires
Of emerald and opal, tourmaline,
Jasper and beryl; and the palace itself
So drank the sky and paled above the lake
And sparkled with the trees, that all its lines
Filmed into lights and hollows without form,
A gem folded in darkness. And while the Prince
Hesitated, the doors moved, and there came
Forth from its luminous halls under the sky

POEMS

A snow-white Princess robed in azure and crowned
With silver; and her eyes were like the moon;
Her hair was like the midnight; and she moved
Like starlight on a river. And she took
His hand, and spoke his name softly, and turned
Her face up, saying:

“ I have waited long,
And thou hast wandered far to find me. Come—
I weary of the stillness here.”

And he,
Recognizing the vision of his dream,
Yet for the memory of unhappiness
Doubtful:

“ Hast thou in truth awaited me?”

And while he spoke, a writhing shadow fell
Between them, and with great wings covering the
moon,

Over the hills a dreadful dragon flew,
Scaled all in venomous green like the bright scum
That shines on stagnant water; and his eyes,
Lidless, flickered unsteady fires, and forth
Out of his nostrils puffed thin wreaths of smoke.
Folding his leathery vans, the monster swung
To rest beside them, and his talons rasped
The gravel. Then the Princess, with one arm
Over his scaly crest:

“ Behold my Lord
And Master. Therefore, if thou bear a heart

THE WHITE CAT: A FAIRY-POEM

Strong beyond common love, casting out fear,
Follow."

The Dragon swelled, and firelit smoke
Puffed with his laughter. And the King's Son, all
His heart heated with horror of such a mate,
And all his manhood strung with danger, strode
After them. But the White Cat bent herself
Into a feathery arch, and fluffed her tail,
Hissing hatred, and fled, and hid herself
In the green lights and shadows of the trees,
And would not enter.

But the King's Son passed
Through shadowy halls lit by the Dragon's eyes,
And chilly galleries heated by his breath,
To a high banquet-chamber where the three
Feasted. And ever the Princess smiled on him
Across the board, with timorous glances thrown
Sidelong, and starry beckoning of the eyes
Behind the Dragon, and through subtle speech
Of nothing, words and tones promising all,
And thrills of understanding undeclared—
So that his dream shone out with every breath
Stronger and lovelier; and his wonder grew
That having lost once, he could love the more,
Being grown wise in loving. And he burned
To battle with the Dragon, and triumph, and bear
All that sweet beauty home. Yet, being now
Swordless, and for his first failure the more

POEMS

Certain of death if he again should fail,
And for the Princess watching and warning him,
Hesitated, trusting in her. At last
The Princess, glancing where the Dragon lay,
His scaly length melting into the floor
And lidless eyes flickering, murmured:

“ Sir Prince,
Thou hast a harp. Hast thou no song to charm
The light of lidless eyes?”

And the King's Son,
Mindful at once of many a fairy tale—
How Dragons all sleep under power of song—
And gathering all the passion of his dream
In one wild harmony, his harp unslung,
And sang across the midnight and the moon:

*“ Day sinks down to rest:
Softly falls the night;
Star-fires glance and gleam
On the river's breast,
And the warm, low light
Silvers into dream.*

*“ Let us drift and dream
Here, and leave the rest,—
Earth is ours to-night:
Shadow lulls the gleam,
Gathering to her breast
The lost rays of light.*

THE WHITE CAT: A FAIRY-POEM

“ While behind the light
Of thine eyes, a dream
Wakes, and will not rest,
Yearning to unite
Sundered fires that gleam
Hidden in each breast;

“ And thy breathing breast
Falters with delight,
And our conquering dream,
Crowned, trembles to rest
In the arms of night
Till the dawn shall gleam.

“ Oh, thy hair agleam
Over brow and breast,
And thine eyes alight—
Ah, to bid the dream
Linger, and arrest
The swift hours of night!

“ Therefore, while the night
Gathers, and stars gleam,
Dearest, on my breast
Lay the burden light
Of thy head, and dream. . . .
Close thine eyes, and rest.”

POEMS

And while he sang, the Princess curved herself
Against the scaly body, one white arm
Flung upward over the green crest, and leaned
Her head thereon, with thrilled lips and closed eyes,
Drinking the music. And the Dragon's breath
Came softlier, and his wings dropped; and the flame
In his red nostrils paled, and the sparks died
Out of his eyes; and the gloom deepened, save
For moonbeams glimmering through the icy wall.
And as the last chord rang, trembling away,
The coils fell loosened, and the lidless eyes
Rolled upward. Then the Princess carefully
Slipped from his side, rising, finger on lip,
Where the King's Son awaited her. And he,
Wondering to have won at length his quest
After defeat, opened his arms to her
And whispered:

“Thou art mine now. Therefore come
Home to my Father's kingdom.”

But she said,
Shuddering, and looking down:

“I dare not.”

She seemed
Paler than he had seen her in his dream,
And slighter. Nevertheless, his whole heart yearned
For wonder of her beauty; and he caught

THE WHITE CAT: A FAIRY-POEM

Her hands, crying:

“Have I not sung, and charmed
The Dragon?”

And she answered:

“After all,
He is my Dragon.”

And with that, the Prince,
His dream shattering around him, and his heart
Black with a horror beyond hope, cried out
Heedlessly, taking no thought of his own voice:

“Is there no truth in any fairy tale?”

And with that word, the slumbering Dragon sprang
Above them, breathing smoke and flame, his eyes
Flaring blue levin, and his thunderous vans
Volleying storm; and out of his red throat
Screamed one white blast of fire that seared the ice
To vapour, and the walls burst and the floors
Fell, and the King's Son plunged headlong, far down
Where a black river rushed beneath the ground
As deep under the mountains as themselves
Reared up their craggy heads from earth to sky;
And the waters closed above him falling, and boiled
Around him, and the flood bore him away.

All night the White Cat, wandering alone
Around the enchanted palace, waited in vain
Her master; but at dawn crept carefully

POEMS

Forth to the lake, and where the palace of ice
Had reared its glimmering walls under the moon,
Saw only emptiness; and a black well
Yawned in the ground, and from beneath there came
A sound of rushing water. And full of fear
Yet feeling his presence there, she leaped and clomb
Downward, wherein her eyes, fitted for gloom
Where men's eyes fail them, caught the light, and
showed

Vaults of black stone where a black flood rushed on
Unending. Then along the bank she ran
Swiftly through subterranean dens, and caves
Lapped full of surging water, where the day
Brought no light; till at last, lifted on waves
And whirled on eddies, before her the King's Son
Drifted, senseless and drowned. And at that sight,
She raised a dolorous cry, and where the stream
Set shoreward, leaped and caught his shoulder, and
clung,

Mewing. And the King's Son, hearing her cry,
Half waked out of his swoon, and flung blind arms
Round that which, floating on the flood, upbore
His head above the water. Then, presently,
Long lights gleamed from behind, and on broad vans
Winnowing the gloom, with eyes that glanced on wall
And water, and hot breath poisoning the air,
Over their heads the scaly Dragon flew,
Skimming the wave, and where the King's Son swam,
Dipped like the purple-crested kingfisher,

THE WHITE CAT: A FAIRY-POEM

Snatching at him, and plunged his jaws that boiled
The stream to vapour. Then against the roar
Of flood and fire belled out a golden clang
Before them, and the Golden Giant ran
Leaping along the bank, or wading in
Smote with his mace, and howled with laughter, and
hurled

Huge stones. And the King's Son, by the black glare
Along the water, saw that the floating mass
Whereby he held his head above the stream
Was the white princess of his vision, dead
And ghastly, her hair shining, and her eyes
Glassily mirroring the Dragon's. Then
He shrieked and thrust away; but as he sank
The White Cat clinging on his shoulder cried
Piteously; and he, past all desire
Of his own life, yet lest by his own death
The creature that alone had faith in him,
Though helpless and unhelpful, should be slain,
Clung again to the corpse, and swam, avoiding
Dragon and Giant as he might. So they
For hours beyond numbering drifted down
The black stream through the dim cave; while above,
The Dragon dived and clutched, and alongside
The Golden Giant raged, and his dead dream
Upheld him. And that horror turned his brain
To madness, and through dreadful dreams he saw
Dragon and Princess writhed in one foul coil
Of white and green, Princess and Giant clasped

POEMS

In a golden flame of laughter, and all at once
Mixed in a monstrous whirl of wings and eyes
And limbs and colours; and he heard the hiss
Of kisses, and the corpse whereto he clung
Seemed now the raven Princess, now the Fair;
And within both the vision of his dream
Glimmered, and mocked him. Then the flame and
 roar

Turned murmuring summer wind, and flush of dawn
Over cool fields of billowy blossoms, fair
With purl of brook and song of wakening bird,
And breath of rain-washed woodland; then once
 more,

Struggling back into sense, he saw again
The lurid cavern and the murky flood,
The Giant and the Dragon and the Dead,
And the White Cat that on his shoulder clung—
Lit by uncanny fires and swept along
Through glooms unending, down the unrestful stream.

Slowly as one that from the house of death
Bitterly escaping, swims through fires of pain
And storms of fever, and black floods of sleep,
Till at the last his soul, returning, clears
Faint eyes, and with a dim wonder he sees
The strange walls of his own remembered room,
Where the gray day, through curtains closely drawn

THE WHITE CAT: A FAIRY-POEM

Sickens the lamplight, and the house is still—
Even so the King's Son, gathering his soul
And opening weary eyes, gazed listlessly
Wondering at the strange remembered shores
Of his own country. Over him the hills
Paled through a mist. Behind him, the wan sea,
Laden with heavy clouds too dull for storm,
Plashed, and surged slowly. In front, the fallow
fields

Ran fading into fog, streaked with late snow
And spongy ice; and leafless trees held up
A net of nakedness before the sky;
And the air chilled without frost, and fine rain
Fell without wind, freezing; and the whole land
Barren and brown with desolation, lay
Sick for the end of Winter. The King's Son
Rose, shivering, and the White Cat, that had lain
Close to his breast for warmth, slipped with a snarl,
And found her feet, and yawned and spread her claws
Shaking the wet mist from her feathery fur,
And limped beside him. They went inland, mired
In sodden ruts and heaps of leaden snow,
Through the chill rain, under the darkening sky,
Where light glowed in a cottage window. There
The King's Son, entering, called for food and fire
And messengers; but the goodman, amazed
At the strange figure strangely attended, railed
Upon him for a madman, and thrust him forth.
And the King's Son cursed him, and went his way,

POEMS

The White Cat following, where along the road
A troop of soldiers passed, with clash of steel
And creak of saddle, splashing the mire, and sang
Merrily as they went a bawdy song;
Who, when the King's Son asked whither his way
Led to the Palace, beat their thighs and blew
Glad oaths and laughter, crying:

“ The Palace! He seeks
The Palace! He—the Palace!”

And rode on.

And the King's Son cursed them and went his way,
The White Cat following, where a crowd of boys
Ran homeward, shouting shrilly, and pushed each
other

Into the mire, and hurled wet clods of snow
Laughing; but when the King's Son spoke to them,
Huddled and whispered together, pointing, and then
Ran past, and huddled again beyond him, and there
Pointed and whispered. But the White Cat ran
Before him up a hill, and snuffed the air,
Looked back and called, and ran, and paused again;
And the King's Son, wondering, followed her
Up a long slope, over the ridge, and thence
Through mire and snow and chill rain sifting down
Out of the darkening sky, and stood amazed,
Recognizing the place of his own home;
But where warm lights had burned and tall towers
frowned

Saw only desolation, tottering walls

THE WHITE CAT: A FAIRY-POEM

Unroofed, columns discrowned, and rafters gnawed
Naked by fire, and frozen heaps of stone—
Black ruin. And he drew near, and sat down
Stunned. And the White Cat, creeping to his breast
For warmth, shivered, and the rain fell.

At length,
He rose, and over an angle of the wall
Yet standing, dragged loose timbers and dead vines
For shelter. And the White Cat, creeping in
Nestled close, and the gray lights darkened. Then,
Numb beyond any sorrow, the King's Son
Looked back over his life, unravelling all
His failure, seeing how his dream was vain:
How joy hides from desire, and sleep evades
Weariness, while the accursed bathe in bliss,
And over hell hang the glad gates of heaven;
And gathering dreary madness, lifted up
His voice, tunelessly, and while cold winds wove
Weird counterpoint above the melody,
He sang across the winter and the storm:

*“ Summer now is done,
Leaf and blossom gone—
Faded, every one:*

*“ All her lights withdrawn,
And the dreams of night
And the hopes of dawn.*

POEMS

*“ Wherefore shall I fight?
I have won and lost
All the world’s delight,*

*“ And have paid the cost.
Will the storm deprive
Winter of her frost?*

*“ Wherefore shall I strive?
Neither prize to win,
Joy to keep alive,*

*“ Nor the taste of sin
Beckons me to prove
What may lie therein.*

*“ Wherefore shall I love?
I have known the shames
And the shifts thereof:*

*“ How her faiths and flames
Are but hollow lust
Called by sounding names.*

*“ Honour, pride, and trust
Turn upon my tongue
Into shards and dust;*

THE WHITE CAT: A FAIRY-POEM

*“ All the dice are flung,
All the tales are told,
All the songs are sung—*

*“ Give me, being old,
Peace from pangs begun,
Shelter from the cold,
Shadow from the sun—
Summer now is done.”*

And as the song closed, the White Cat, that slept
Against him, woke hissing, and struggled free,
Bristled and growled, with emerald eyes that glared
Wildly upon him, then leaped forth, and fled
Into the dusk, and vanished. And the King's Son,
Wondering what last horror had changed him so
To fright the creature, raised the dingy glass
That hung still from his girdle, and therein
Saw not himself but that which had been he,
Starting upon his journey; and by his side,
Beautiful as the memory of a dream
And sweet as hope, watching him with glad eyes,
The Princess. Day and night shadowed and shone
Across the magic mirror; and through all,
The vision of his dream following him
Over the mountains and the sea, beyond
The gates of Faery, over the meadows of dawn,
Through the pale mist, across the moon-swept hills,
And down the underground river, all the while

POEMS

Guarding and guiding when he knew it not,
Even to that hour. And while he gazed, between
Memory and vision, suddenly a light fell
Across him, and a sharp fragrance, and there,
Lovelier than he had seen her in his dream,
Stood his own Princess out of Fairyland
Alive before him. Her eyes were like the dawn;
'Her hair was like the twilight; and she moved
Like music over water. And the King's Son
Gazing upon her, felt his whole heart break
For wonder and great love. Nevertheless,
Mindful how he had failed upon the quest
For want of understanding, and of the truth
Under the heart of every fairy tale—
That every quest is but a coming home—
And sorrowing for his last friend gone from him,
Said wearily:

“ I know now. Thou hast come
When all that should be thine dries out of me:
Why not while I was worthy?”

And she said

Softly:

“ How could I?”

And with that, the Prince
Forlorn of all that had been spoiled in him—
Age, and gray hairs, his kingdom gone, his dream
Dried into dust, his power wasted away—
And shaming that such beauty should be bound

THE WHITE CAT: A FAIRY-POEM

Save unto strength and freshness like her own,
Answered:

“ I have grown old now, having seen
How joy hides from desire to dog the steps
Of languor. I have sought my dream, and lost
The power of dreaming. What life I have left
Thou hast saved. My thanks therefore; and . . .
farewell.”

While he had spoken, she with narrowing eyes
And arms bent inward on her bosom, looked
Elsewhere. At last she said:

“ Thou hast no gift
To give me. I ask nothing. Is there none
Thou wilt receive?”

And the Prince answered:

“ One—
One friend, no dream, that stood with me through all;
That could not help, but would not hide from me;
Helpless, but would not fear. Now, if thou be
Truly a princess out of Fairyland,
Find her.”

Thereat the Princess with one cry,
Half purr, half laughter, sprang to him, and back
From her white throat the furry mantle flung,
And locked her arms about him, and on his heart
Hid her face, and sighed happily, and lay still.

POEMS

And the King's Son held her, speaking no word;
Knowing in her warm breast all fires that burn
By happy hearths, and in her dusk of hair
The breath of all the roses of the earth,
And in her eyes the wonder of all dawns
From the beginning of the world. And while
They clung together, trembling, a sweet wind
Blew suddenly out of the blossomy South,
Full of a nameless joy; and the gray snows
Bloomed, and the darkness brightened, and the clouds
Parted, and over Winter brake the Spring.

SONNETS

IDOLATRY: THREE SONNETS

I

I must forget life, ere you shall persuade
My heart beyond it. Though at last I came
Without hope to the horror of dark flame,
Or among glad great angels dreamed and prayed,
What matter? Have I not already made
Love's own lips tremulous to breathe my name
And seen all night the lidless eyes of shame
Stare through the darkness where I lay afraid?

I should yearn down from Heaven at the voice
Of a strong child crying out angrily—
Struggle up from Nirvana for the smell
Of rain-sweet woods in Autumn; or rejoice
To watch the moon rise over a dim sea,
Lifting my head serenely out of Hell.

POEMS

II

If God should say: "From all my power to bless
Choose thine own heaven, where the soul shall be
Fired with white joy, or drowned in a sweet sea
Of everlasting calm forgetfulness."

I should make answer: "Lord, earth's images
Of heaven are fairer; therefore leave me free—
Make me immortal in mortality—
Thou hast no more to give; grant me no less."

Wonder too deep for dream; glory to blind
The sight of angels; agony to endure
Beyond all sense; hate, laughter, love, and fear—
What need for other worlds? The soul were sure,
After innumerable lives, to find
Ever inviolate adventures here.

IDOLATRY: THREE SONNETS

III

Lord, for no man may look upon thy face,
I turn from seeking thee to fall before
The forms of thy creation, and adore
The sacred clay of thine abiding-place:
Yea, as a lover treasureth some trace
Of her who will not hear, so evermore
Close to my heart I wear the golden lore
Of beauty, gemmed with shining nights and days.

Dost thou not laugh in every child, and brood
In every mother? Whose joy glorifies
The passion of new loving, and controls
Old pain? Are not our songs half-understood
Overtones of thy voice, and our own souls
Images of the dream behind thine eyes?

ANDANTE

Now gently sinks the long sweet Summer day
In blossom-breathing dimness. The sharp wings
Of chattering swallows touch with mystic rings
The shadowy pool. The last wide Western ray
Glowes tawny-crimson. And from far away,
Each breeze that stirs the timorous poplar brings
The moan of herds, the call of feathered things,
The song and laugh of little ones at play . . .

All beauty. Pain and passion seem as far
From this calm spot as yon grim city, spread
Behind the smoke-topped mountains, where the
breast
Of patient earth sobs to the ceaseless jar
Of steel on stone, the clash of bells, the tread
Of slumberless myriads. Here is only rest.

A SCHOOLGIRL SPEAKS

You are not like the others—that is all.

I do not think you wonderful nor wise,

Make you a hero in my reveries,

Nor bend my fancy to your beck and call;

Yet . . . when you come, there seems a veil let fall,

And little matters brighten and surprise—

I am afraid of something in your eyes,

And I am glad that you are strong and tall.

I have not given this new thing a name—

Not even to myself. You cannot see,

And I should hate you if I thought you knew—

Only . . . I am grown older since you came,

Stronger, because your strength belongs to me,

And more myself, being a part of you.

LOVE AND PAIN: TWO SONNETS

I

I dreamed. And lo, upon a shadowy mound
Love stood alone beneath a juniper,
And all the light of heaven brake from her,
Golden, and shook about her like a sound.
Then, drawing nearer, by her side I found
A sister-shape that ever might not stir
From Love's left hand. Death-white her features
were;
Her lips were straight and scarlet, like a wound.

I have seen a tree, against the Western light
Nebulous with golden glory: and again,
Graven against the gloaming, ebony-plain.
Even so all delicate wonders, overbright
Upon the face of Love for mortal sight,
Were shadow-graven on the face of Pain.

LOVE AND PAIN: TWO SONNETS

II

I cried: " Love, must it ever be thy price
To find thee fostering this form of dread? "
And Love looked at me with thine eyes, and said:
" She is the shadow of a soul, that lies
Within my light, Mistress of Mysteries.
Face her, and find; flee her, and I am fled."
And at the word, that phantom raised her head,
Smiling. I saw that she too had thine eyes.

Then while I wondered, she drew near, to lay
Cold hands of fear upon my heart, and pressed
Terrible lips on mine; and as the crest
Of some dark wave shatters to shining spray,
So my dream swelled and shattered into day—
And Love's own self lay laughing on my breast.

GHOSTS

The dead return to us continually:

Not at the void of night, as fables feign,

In some lone spot where murdered bones have lain

Wailing for vengeance to the passer-by;

But in the merry clamour and full cry

Of the brave noon, our dead whom we have slain

And in forgotten graves hidden in vain,

Rise up and stand beside us terribly.

Sick with the beauty of their dear decay

We conjure them with laughters onerous

And drunkenness of labour; yet not thus

May we absolve ourselves of yesterday—

We cannot put those clinging arms away,

Nor those glad faces yearning over us.

“ HAEC OLIM MEMINISSE . . . ”

There is a Summer stillness everywhere.

Under the woven pines my Lady lies

Dreaming, with childlike lips, and mysteries
Of light and shadow moving in her hair.

Her faith hangs over us and thrills the air,

And the trees know it, and the butterflies

Flash it across the sunbeams. In her eyes

Unspoken gladness gathers like a prayer.

Dear, in the twilight of our happiness,

After the flame and struggle of the day,

We shall look back sweetly on hours like these:

Not seared into our hearts by any stress,

But sealed with Love's own seal, and laid away

Within the starlit treasuries of Peace.

SOMNAMBULA

She fills her hours with fantasy, to keep
The great hour silent: blossom-loves that fall
Unmourned, pleasures of labour prodigal,
And careless woes eager for tears to weep—
Ripples on the unfathomable deep,
Flashing with foam and sunshine, musical
With lispings reeds and prattling shallows—all
Busily alive; and all that life one sleep.

Laughter, and merry memories, and sweet breath
Of days made rich by many a brief desire—
These are her dreams. Their glimmering veils
are drawn
Where (O, tread softly!) herself hides beneath. . . .
Hush! . . . Woman, with her soul of song and fire,
Slumbering quietly before the dawn.

FROM LIFE

Her thoughts are like a flock of butterflies.

She has a merry love of little things

And a bright flutter of speech, whereto she brings
A threefold eloquence—voice, hands, and eyes.

Yet under all a subtle silence lies,

As a bird's heart is hidden by its wings,

And you shall search through many wanderings
The Fairyland of her realities.

She hides herself behind a busy brain:

A woman, with a child's laugh in her blood,

A maid, wearing the shadow of motherhood,—
Wise with the quiet memory of old pain,
As the soft glamour of remembered rain
Hallows the gladness of a sunlit wood.

A PORTRAIT

Mother and maid and soldier, bearing best
Her girl's lithe body under matron gray,
And opening new eyes on each new day
With faith concealed and courage unconfessed;
Jealous to cloak a blessing in a jest,
Clothe beauty carefully in disarray,
And love absurdly, that no word betray
The worship all her deeds make manifest:

Armoured in smiles, a motley Britomart—
Her lance is high adventure, tipped with scorn;
Her banner to the suns and winds unfurled,
Washed white with laughter; and beneath her heart,
Shrined in a garland of laborious thorn,
Blooms the unchanging Rose of all the World.

ARS LONGA

Not thy great gifts, O God! I would not be
The prophet honoured in an alien clime;
Or send my name trumpeting down through time,
Selling my manhood for a memory.
So should I fade into the shows of me:—
My joy become the reason of a rhyme,
My pain, a figure in the pantomime,
My love, a light over an unknown sea.

Give me but what thou givest all mankind:
A little faith in that I labour for,
A friend whose name I daily think to bless,
A woman in whose eyes I seek and find,
Children mysteriously mine—no more
Than common, ordinary happiness.

APRIL NOON

Silence. Faint warmth of the awakening sun
Drowned in pale light. The meadows lapse away—
Ridges of brown and slopes of sallow gray—
To where the leafless hills are dusky-dun.
Earth holds her breath, and waits while slowly run
The ordered hours in pitiless delay;
Fearing the vanished snows of yesterday,
Nor daring yet to deem the Summer won.

As a sick woman from the house of death
But newly ransomed, overweak to care
For life renewed and love made warm again,
Faints slowly back to life with each calm breath,
Finding a joy almost too keen to bear
Only in this, that there is no more pain.

FOR THE CENTENARY OF SAMUEL
JOHNSON

FOR THE CENTENARY OF SAMUEL JOHNSON

When the slow cycle of a hundred years
Out of the dark some golden date uprears
Whose casual numbers form a spell to raise
Dead virtues up amid appointed praise,
Conjure huge ghosts out of their gorgeous gloom
And lay brief wreaths on some immortal tomb,—
How many celebrants completely know
What acts deserve the homage they bestow?
How many of the multitudes who throng
To laud the Singer, that have heard the song?
Or, while they hail the Artist's deed supreme,
Dwell with him in the beauty of his dream?
The leaders of the hour—a few at most—
Honour a man: the people praise a ghost.
Theirs not to ask what made the holiday—
The priest proclaims; the worshippers obey:
From mouldering shrines the festal fires arise,
And unknown gods are throned in alien skies;
Forgotten deeds their sires commemorate,
And names remembered prove their bearers great.

POEMS

So we to-night raise monumental breath
To works already crumbling into death,
Pay each unopened tome a generous meed—
Delight to honour, and decline to read.
Who rambles with the *Rambler*? Who hath power
To invoke the *Idler* for an idle hour,
Thread the great Lexicon's laborious mass,
Or wrestle in the waste with *Rasselas*?
Yet . . . we do well. Smile as we may on those
Who praise immortal works that no one knows,
We need not bear that charge, who celebrate
No man ephemeral whom his deeds made great—
No Artist, whose dominion and control
End with his work—we celebrate a soul.
Johnson has been and is: here stands his pride—
A spirit living whose exploits have died.

Have you not known some friend whom but to see
Was Faith, whose silence was Philosophy,
Whose presence Love—yet bore a common fate
And did no deed of those which men call great?
In whom all powers burned but could not shine—
A poet, though he never wrote a line,
A general whose wars were all a jest,
A prince whose kingdom was the passing guest,
A saint at heart, who loved the homely strife
And gay sins of an ordinary life—
Who wore his human frailties like a crown,
Whose humour kept his colder virtues down

CENTENARY OF SAMUEL JOHNSON

Lest they should leave the kindly earth, and rise
Snow-peaked to the discomfortable skies?
On such men's graves no formal blooms are flung—
They live unheralded and die unsung;
Nor can our words their secret worth convey
To light the darkness of a later day.
Yet there is little need. Their lives live on
Beyond all fame that genius might have won.
They dwell in us, to whom their frequency lent
A Being greater than Accomplishment,—
A joy in joy, a strength to stand unawed
Before the storms of pain, a proof of God.

So much the virtue of a soul proceeds
More from itself than from its actual deeds;
So much the giver is the gift's best worth—
The man more potent than his work on earth—
That legendary kings deserve their fame
But by a breath, tradition, and a name.
Great men their eulogists immortalize,
And shine reflected in unbodied eyes.
So we discover that Athenian Sage
Not on his own but on another's page,
And by this tribute read his wisdom clear:
That Plato stooped to be his chronicler.
And so with Johnson. Though his works be dust,
His words dim with unconquerable rust,
The man lives on—a legend and a face
Stamped on the coinage of our English race.

POEMS

What though his windmill foes be all o'erthrown?
His heart still fights with dragons in our own.
What though great friends his lustre overdim?
He lived with giants, and they honored him.
Still on the vast horizon of the years,
Over the kneeling radiance of his peers,
His craggy figure towers: quaint, uncouth,
A savage bravery of homely truth,
A courage stumbling on through toil and pain,
A clumsy humour, and a clean disdain,—
A cloudy pillar of sustained desire
Which, when the gloom o'erwhelmed it, turned to fire;
An Ursa Major, wheeling round the pole
Outlined in stars, and every star a soul—
Souls of less worth more visibly expressed
Whose light keeps the great shadow manifest.

Not only those who dwell in ancient days
To Johnson's name pay veritable praise;
Not only they whose learning holds by heart
The musty worthiness his words impart—
We, like blind mirrors, hold his image clear,
And in strange tongues bid the brave ghost appear.

October, 1909.

SONGS

A MAN-CHILD'S LULLABY

Little groping hands that must learn the weight of
labour,

Little eyes of wonder that must learn to weep;
Mother is thy life now: that shall be to-morrow—
Time enough for trouble—time enough for sorrow—
Now . . . sleep.

Little dumb lips that shall wake and make a woman,
Little blind heart that shall know the worst and
best;

Mother is thy love now: that shall be hereafter—
Time enough for joy, and time enough for laughter—
Now . . . rest.

Little rosy body, new-born of pain and beauty,
Little lonely soul new-risen from the deep;
Mother is thy world now, whole and satisfying—
Time enough for living—time enough for dying—
Now . . . sleep.

AMULETS

Out of the dark, your eyes,
 Beckoning far and fair,
Under whose laughter gleams
A witchery of dreams—
 A fantasy of prayer—
Making new hopes arise
 Out of the dark . . . your eyes!

Out of the storm, your voice,
 Bidding the sea be still,
Warm with the kindly mirth
And honesty of earth,
 Rousing my strength to will,
And struggle, and rejoice
 Out of the storm . . . your voice!

Out of the world, your heart,
 Waiting to call me home—
A beautiful calm place
Wherein to hide my face
 Awhile from flame and foam,
Feeling all pain depart
 Out of the world . . . your heart!

SONG

Dear, though you wander over peace and passion,
 Searching the days to prove yourself untrue,
You cannot hide me. Still, in my own fashion,
 I shall come back to you.

In other eyes, on lips that bid you doubt me,
 In music, in the little things we knew,
In your blind prayers for happiness without me—
 I shall come back to you.

God keep you safe through all the ache of learning,
 Through all the wrong you need to be and do,
Till in the wise joy of unfearful yearning
 I shall come back—I shall come back to you!

MOTHER OF MEN

Mother of Men, grown strong in giving
Honour to them thy lights have led;
Rich in the faith of thousands living,
Proud of the deeds of thousands dead—
We who have felt thy power, and known thee,
We in whose work thy gifts avail,
High in our hearts enshrined enthrone thee,
Mother of Men—Old Yale!

Spirit of youth, alive, unchanging,
Under whose feet the years are cast;
Queen of an ageless empire, ranging
Over the future and the past—
Thee, whom our fathers loved before us,
Thee, whom our sons unborn shall hail,
Praise we to-day in sturdy chorus,
Mother of Men—Old Yale!

New Haven, 1909.

A MAN'S SONG

Sweetheart, love me dearly—
Why need you struggle so;
Keep the kiss you mean for me,
Hide the heart I know?
All your truth and purity
Into love are grown—
Sweetheart, love me dearly
While to-day's our own!

Sweetheart, love me truly,
And all good dreams are true—
Life and death are little things
In the light of you.
Only let your wonderings
Keep me strong and sure—
Sweetheart, love me truly
While our days endure.

A WOMAN'S SONG

Glad and fair is my young love,
He to whom my pulses move,
 He whose pleasure I obey—
 Glad as dawn, and fair as day.

Very strong and sweet is he
That hath lordship over me—
 He to whom I all am given—
 Strong as death, and sweet as heaven.

Mary Mother, grant me this
Only, out of all thy bliss:
 Let his longing never tire—
 (He whose lips are ice and fire—)
 Make me worth his whole desire!

A ROBIN'S SONG

Wake, Pretty One, wake!
The morn comes over the mountain;
Tenderly, gaily, the swift, sweet breeze
Kisses the dew from the trembling trees;
Day's ready to break—
Wake, Pretty One, wake!

Sing, Pretty One, sing!
The violet blooms by the fountain;
Under the cool of the hawthorn spray,
Sunlight and shadowlet dance and play;
Love, love's on the wing—
Sing, Pretty One, sing!

Rest, Pretty One, rest!
The sun sinks under the mountain;
Mother-bird night, with her warm wings furled,
Broods o'er the dusk of the sleeping world;
Safe under her breast
Rest, Pretty One, rest!

AN OLD SONG

When all the winds are mellow in the glad Spring-
time,

And bank and fell and fallow blossom-laden,
When every breath's a song, and every laugh like
rhyme—

Sing hey, the day for youth to meet a maiden!

Then out amid the morning,

Let Wisdom waste her warning—

We'll laugh, Dear Heart, and sing, Dear Heart,
through all the golden day!

Red lips are such a treasure

As only love can measure,

When all the world is merry in the month of May!

When all the dark is hollow, and the wind blows
cold,

And down the West the tawny sun is sinking;

When every word is wise, and every heart grows
old,—

Sing ho, the night's a noble time for drinking!

Then drown the wizard Sorrow!

To-night from death we borrow—

We'll laugh, good friends, and quaff, good friends,
until the dawn of day!

Let song and wine remind us

Of loves we left behind us,

When all the world was merry in the month of May!

SONG

The skies are dimly bright, Love,
The stars like pulses beat
That falter with delight, Love,
And the breeze is maddening-sweet—
The breeze is maddening-sweet!
Borne soft along its way,
The sighs of sleepy flowers
From bowers to dusky bowers
Its laden wings delay.

The world is hushed in shade, Love,
And shadowed all my heart;
This night for us was made, Love, . . .
And we so far apart—
And we so far apart!
Unheeded on my ear
The folded whispers fall—
In vain the shadows call,
Because thou art not here.

SONG

I know a bower sweet and shy,
 Where glooms a stream
Beneath cool films of leaf and sky
 Where river-lilies lie and dream;
 Where very quietly
 Small birds make melody,
And every breeze on tiptoe comes and goes—
To that dim bower that no one knows—
My bower of peace that no one knows!

I know a heart unwisely dear,
 Where blooms a joy
That never doubt may venture near,
 Nor any barren fear destroy;
 That poureth over me
 Child-sweetness wondrously,
And dareth wholly unto me disclose
That gentle heart that no one knows—
Dear heart of peace that no one knows!

TOGETHER

Glory of a golden light over vale and hill,
Daisy-fields a-bending to the swift wind's will,
Summer-sweet in every breath, a bird on every
spray,—
And it's you and I together, Dear, the livelong day!

Wonder of a misty moon high above the wood,
Glamour in the valley and our own hearts' blood,
All the breathing dark alive with murmurs of
delight,—
And it's you and I together, Sweet, the livelong
night!

Win a world or lose a world—peace or weary strain,—
Summer dawn of joy, or Winter dusk of pain—
Every time I think of you, it's like a lilt of song,
For it's you and I together, Love, a whole life long!

ROSA MUNDI

In a garden glad and green
Blooms a rose unknown, unseen,
Ruby-bosomed like a flame,
Holy, like a holy name—
All the world have part and right
In the garden's rich delight:
Each may gather all he knows . . .
I alone have known the Rose.

Through a world of waste and wrong
Floats a benison of song,
Pouring on the multitude
All their souls can bear of good;
Giving them who know and care
Beauty, laughter, pain, and prayer—
Each his own realities . . .
Mine the Singer's lips and eyes.

THE MOON-PATH

Fair and afar and aflame in the sky,
 Over the tide,
Glimmers the great moon calm and high—
 The golden sign of my heart's desire—
Never the nearer, though I stand
Without faith on the lip of the land,
 Or follow, follow her endlessly
 Over the heaving gloom of the sea—
 Over the weary sea—
 Over the sea.

Cold and aloof and alone in the sky
 Let her bide,
Pouring her beauty down from on high—
 A river of rest for the heart's desire—
A golden pathway flowing to meet
The lone quest of my faltering feet,
 And carry, carry me endlessly
 Over the dream-dark, wonderful sea—
 Over the foam-bright sea—
 Over the sea.

OFFERINGS

If I could sing as no man ever sang—
Find the red heart of that unspoken lore
That all sweet sound is only hunger for,—
If I might call the moonlight on the sea,
The river-lily's dream, the soul of dew,
To lead the voices of my harmony,
I should have songs, O Love, to sing to you.

If I could love as no man ever loved—
The seeking of the girl unsatisfied,
The passion of the bridegroom for the bride,
The mother's wonder in her newborn son,
The boy's fresh rapture in his life come true—
If I might compass all these loves in one,
I should have love, O Love, to bring to you.

SONG

Only a little while since first we met,
And soon the sea, with many a weary mile,
Shall sever us forever, Sweet . . . and yet,
Will it be very easy to forget?—
Only a little while!

Only a little while that I may claim
The whole soul's breath of you without denial,
And see your eyes grow golden with a flame
That is not Love, yet hath no other name—
Only a little while!

Only a little while to use my art
So that some day you may look back, and smile
Out of a joy wherein I have no part
On that old self of yours that filled my heart
Only a little while!

SONG

The clouds are drifting drowsily,
The sea drinks in the sun,
And it's O for the dawn that is dead and gone,
And the deeds I might have done—
Brave deeds I might have done!

The waning moon is red and low,
The slow wind brings the rain,
And it's O for the night of dear delight
That shall not be again—
That cannot be again!

The crawling mists are cold and white,
The lights are blank and gray,
And it's O for command of heart and hand
To do my work to-day—
Only my work to-day!

ABSENCES

Dawn-light and bird-song and trees against the blue—
All the lights of heaven, Dear, are fair because of
you! . . .

But now the fields are fallow, and all the skies are
gray;
Empty of the sight of you to light love's way.

Hearth-light and home-song, and voices by the fire,
Merry with your mirth, Dear, and warm with your
desire. . . .

But now the house is hollow, and all the fires are
chill;
Barren of the joy of you to wake love's will.

Come to me, bring back to me the heart of day and
night,
The body of all beauty, and the soul of all delight!—
Sunbeam and star-shine, roses after rain,
The colour and the melody, the laughter and the
pain,
And all my life alive in me to hold you close again!

MORVEN AND THE GRAIL

MORVEN AND THE GRAIL

ANGELS OF THE GRAIL

Morven! . . Morven! . . Morven! . .

Blood and Water,

Water and Wine,

World without end: three signs, one wonder—

Follow the Vision,—

Follow the Grail!

*Morven,
seafaring
upon the
quest of
the Grail,
heareth the
Angels
thereof
calling
unto him;*

MORVEN

Blood of the sunset

Adown the dark water,

Wine of the wind, sweeping

Onward, Westward,

Herding the numberless

Rush of foam-flinging

Surges homeward

Whither we follow

Over the golden

Floors of sundown:

One way together

Westward wending—

The sweep of the wind,

The weight of the wave,

The leap of the sail,

And the swing of the oar.

*and will
follow the
world's
dream, even
unto the end
of the world.*

POEMS

One way, the sun's way,
 Onward, Westward,
From dawn to noonday
From noon to even,
 From darkness to darkness;
One way, the soul's way,
 Out of the darkness
 For one day only,
Westward, onward,
Alone down the gloaming,
 Into the darkness.

One dream, the world's dream
 Alone we follow,
O my wanderers,
My strong companions,—
 Follow the holy
 Angel-guarded
 Vision, the golden
 Grail, that shineth
 Eternal, Immortal;
Onward, Westward,
 Heavenward, homeward,
 Follow the Vision—
 Follow the Grail!

MORVEN AND THE GRAIL

CHORUS: IN AVALON

Hither, O hither and rest! On the broad sea's billowy
bosom,

Avalon, bride of the West, smiles in the arms of
the foam;

Balm of warm noon, drowsy bird, and awakening
blossom,

Charm the tremulous air, welcome the wanderer
home.

Here, over meadows of endless May, the drifting
clouds of a downy whiteness

Gleam, and the sunbeam follows the shadow under
the bloom of purple skies;

Here the wild moon crowns the mountains, drowning
the gloom in a bath of brightness
Perfumed with paradise.

We have forgotten your tears. Will ye feed im-
possible yearning

With young years, and fight hungrily, proud of
your pain?

Come unto us, and discover the old sweet beauty
returning

Beauty, desire to delight, lover to lover again!

*He cometh to
the island
Avalon, the
heaven of
pleasure;
and there for
a time
abideth in
bliss.*

POEMS

Knights grown weary of hopeless honour, ladies fain
of ungathered flowers,
Saints unvisited, and sages dry of wine, and singers
barren of song—
Learn the joy ye long for, join the dance of the rosy-
footed hours,
Laughing our days along.

SONG OF SIGURD THE VOLSUNG

The gold of the morning
Shines on my shield,
Her jewels adorning
The sword that I wield;
Clear of light and clean of breath—
Here's a day for life or death!
For war without warning
By forest and field.

For maidenhood sleeping
By fire girded round,
For wealth of the creeping
Worm underground;
Thank the gods, who gave the same
To the dragon and the flame,
That gaining and keeping
A man may be found!

*But hearing
in his heart
as it were
the voice of
young
Sigurd
riding forth
against the
Dragon, he is
aware how
man may
not content
him forever
in sweet joy;*

MORVEN AND THE GRAIL

Then smite hard and spare not,
 Foeman unknown!
I fear not, I care not,
 Mine arm is mine own.
God nor man that hears my horn,
Troll nor monster mountain-born,—
 Shall dare what I dare not,
 Till one be o'erthrown!

MORVEN

Let me go hence! . .
 I have hungered and thirsted
 Overlong in your Avalon.
Here is no heaven—
 The Grail is not here!

CHORUS

Is there another joy than joy? O lover of sorrow,
 Surely our lips and eyes answer thine own, and are
 sweet!

MORVEN

Lo, in my heart
 Heard I one singing
Of youth war-hardy,
Pure of pleasure,
 Glad against fear.

*and of the
Grail also,
even the
desire of the
soul that is
not in
Avalon.
Wherefore,
despite them
seeking to
stay him, he
departeth
out of that
heaven.*

POEMS

CHORUS

Out of the arms of to-day let not the wanton to-
morrow

Lure thee away with lies. Fool, in what land shall
ye meet?

MORVEN

And I said, beholding
Beauty that breedeth
Barren roses,
And love unfought for,
A flower without fruit—
How shall I make me
An end of manhood
To lie unavailing,
Unwarlike, unworthy,
Steeped in sweet?

CHORUS

No more. There is no home but here, nor ever was,
nor shall be forever.

Over our stars forbidden heavens, under our
flowers forgotten hells

Warn in vain; before and beyond, the wind's unrest
and the sea's endeavour

Dream, and shall find naught else.

MORVEN AND THE GRAIL

MORVEN

I will go in might
As a man, wayfaring
Whither the brave blood
Poured for sword-swing
Riseth again
As the rain returning
Sunward, and turneth
To wine poured forth
Before heroes in heaven.
Thither will I too
Fare and follow
Beyond the world's end,
Over the rainbow,
Onward, upward,
Heavenward, homeward,
Follow the Vision—
Follow the Grail!

CHORUS: IN VALHALLA

To Valhall, O Stranger,
Drink deep, and be cheered
For days of thy danger
And ways of thy weird,
Ere the war-maidens bore us
The heroes high-vaunting,

POEMS

*Then cometh
he to
Valhalla of
the Old Gods,
the heaven
of stark
manhood;
and there
abideth in
glory for a
time.*

Stout sons of the sword—
With the great ones before us
To ride to the hunting,
And feast at the board.
By the field, by the foam,
Where our hearts were not wanting,
Where our force did not fail—
We have won our reward,
We are crowned, we are come,
To Valhalla our home.
Waes Hael!

To our brothers who fought us,
Good welcome again!
Your manhood first taught us
We also were men.
By our wars without hate,
By our wounds without shame,
By our death without fear—
Hand in hand, mate by mate,
Pledge our fellowship here.
For the love of the game,
The strong arm that defends
Till a stronger prevail,
The high deeds, the hard ends,—
To our foemen, our friends,
Waes Hael!

MORVEN AND THE GRAIL

To our grim gods, who drained us
Of sorrow and joy;
Disowned us, disdained us,
Till all that remained us
Ye could not destroy:
By the hammer of doom,
By the flame of desire,
By the flood of despair—
Ye have forged us a pride
Either side of the tomb,
Undismayed here as there.
For the gloom and the fire,
For our woe, for our worth
Before heaven and earth,
Pour once more the brown ale!—
To the gods we defied,
Face to face, open-eyed,
Waes Hael!

HYMN OF SAINT CECILIA

Let my sorrow, Lord,
Seek thy breast;
Never, but for thee,
Faint or fear—
Till I find my rest,
My reward,
Folded in thy dear
Purity.

POEMS

*But hearing
in his soul as
it were the
voice of
Saint Cecilia
hymning
Christ her
Lord, he is
aware how
man may not
content him
forever in
triumph;*

Never let me weep
Any more—
Only lay my soul
In thy hand;
Only as before
Fall asleep,
Making thy command
My control.

Close the world away
From my sight;
Let the legions move,—
Lovers cling,—
Hidden in the night;
While the day
Owns but thee, one King
And one Love.

MORVEN

Let me go hence! . .
Lo, in my soul
Have I heard one singing
Of faith white-hearted,
Holy in sorrow,
Lowly in prayer.

MORVEN AND THE GRAIL

And I said, remembering
Pride that drinketh
Bitter water
And power unbridled,
A fire without food—
How shall I make me
An end of wonder
To vaunt in Valhalla
Unhumbled, unhallowed—
The Grail is not there!

*and the
Grail also,
even the
desire of the
soul that is
not in
Valhalla.
Wherefore
he departeth
out of that
heaven.*

I will go in my sins
As a pilgrim, seeking
Whither the tears
Of the world, forever
Calm with forgiveness,
Flow like a shining
River of peace
Before Christ in heaven;
And beneath Him, around Him,
Glad golden angels,
Grave-eyed like children,
Cast their crowns down
By the fountain, crying:
Holy, Holy, Holy.

POEMS

Thither will I too
Fare and follow
Through the silence—
Beyond the shadow—
Onward, upward,
Heavenward, homeward,
Follow the Vision—
Follow the Grail!

CHORUS: IN PARADISE

Golden with hearts of gold thine everlasting city—
Rainbow-bright with jewels, and every gem a
soul—
Hosanna! The Lord above
Reigneth as a lord of love—
Hosanna! the Lord of might that is Lord of pity
Buildeth of broken things the glory and the goal!

*Then cometh
he among the
Saints in
Paradise,
the heaven of
holiness;
and there
abideth his
time in
Peace.*

We have sinned and turned away our faces
From the light we could not call our own;
Father, thou hast sought in lonely places
For thy children, gathered us and crowned us
With the peace that blooms about thy throne.

MORVEN AND THE GRAIL

We have sorrowed where our fears confound us
And the clouds return after the rain;
Saviour, for thy death we feel around us
Arms departed, hear forgotten voices,
And the eyes we saw weep, smile again.

We have dreamed: by fitful flames, and noises
Of the night, we fought and labored long;
Spirit, in thy mystery rejoices
The lost heart of dreams, the purer glory
Shining at the end of every story—
Calling at the close of every song.

Therefore with angels, with Cherubim and Seraphim,
With all who shall follow and all who went before,
Hosanna! The King of Kings
Hath compassed His imaginings!
Hosanna! We praise Him and magnify His name;
to Him
The Kingdom and the power and the glory ever-
more!

POEMS

LULLABY OF OUR LADY

I have dreamed of strange things
This night. Lo, they are gone—
The voices, and great wings,
And the three kneeling kings—
Leaving me here alone
Now all is done
With this that is mine own. . .
The Man, my Son.

*But hearing
in his spirit
as it were
Our Lady
communing
with her
Child new-
born into the
world, he is
aware how
man may not
content him
forever at
rest;*

Master, thy high commands! . .
Must we put forth to bless
Unfathomed seas, far lands,
These little angry hands?—
Will earthquake and eclipse
Claim, and confess
Those little hungry lips
Of helplessness?

Ah, hush, then! . . Take no heed
Of prophecy nor sign,
While I am all thy need
Though thou be God indeed.
What matter less or more,
Human, divine?—
Never was born before
A babe like mine.

MORVEN AND THE GRAIL

MORVEN

Let me go hence! . .

Prayer and praise
Have I proven in Paradise;
The Grail only
Beheld I never
In any heaven.

For lo, even now,
Even here, my spirit
Heard one singing
Of life new-born
Unto hope and hunger
Adventure, endeavour;
And I said, understanding
The eyes of children,
The lips of women,
The hands of men—
I will go down
Out of rest forever
For love of the world
To the world again.

I will go as a babe
That is born, as a soul sent
Forth from before God
Bathed in forgetfulness

*and of the
Grail also,
even the
desire of the
soul that is
not in
Paradise,
neither to be
found in any
place, but
rather
followed
through all.
Wherefore
he will
depart out
of that
heaven, to be
born again
and become
as a little
child.*

POEMS

To wonder and wander
Through pain and beauty,
Laughter and labour
And shame, unendingly,
Knowing and growing.

One way, the world's way,
The sun's way, the soul's way—
Day after day
From the deep rearisen,
The same, yet another,
Westward wending
From dawn to noon
From noon to even
From even to dawn.
One dream, God's dream
That no man knoweth
Never to find
Forever to follow—
The un beholden
Glory, the gleam
Above all heavens
Beyond all horizons—
Earthward, downward
Outward, onward,
Follow the wonder—
Follow the Grail!

MORVEN AND THE GRAIL

ANGELS OF THE GRAIL

Morven! . . Morven! . . Morven! . .

Blood and water

Water and wine

Life, death, and life, three dreams, one waking—

Behold the vision—

Behold the Grail!

From His throne alone and afar
In the night before light began,
The Lord let fall a star
Into the heart of the sea.
And a ripple arose and ran
Spreading eternally
In glimmering rings that roll
Over the dark of the sea,
As the ripple of years that flow
Over the dark of the soul—
Circles of weal and woe
Widening evermore,
With hell in the gulf below
And heaven where shadows move
To the shore that is no shore.
And in the light thereof
Are all things written plain;
For the name of the sea was Love
And the name of the star was Pain.

*Thereupon
the heavens
are opened
unto him,
and he
beholdeth in
a vision the
Grail and
the Angels
thereof sing-
ing of the
mystery of
God's crea-
tion: how
man shall
not cease but
through light
and dark-
ness, love
and pain,
death and
birth, live on
between Hell
and Heaven
in wonder
everlasting.*

POEMS

And the Lord lifted up
Gold of the star that fell,
And fashioned a golden cup
Thereof, and blent therein
Wine that was poured in hell
To waken the heart of sin;
Water from streams that rise
Where weary angels win
Heaven, and fall asleep;
And blood of sacrifice
Burned for old gods that weep
Forgotten. And the Lord
Blessed the cup, and drank deep
And set it for a sign
In the West, and spoke a word,
Saying: “ *This blood is mine:
Let him who hungereth
Drink.*” And he called the wine
Life, and the water Death.

And over the face of the world
Fly, as the shadow flies
Where a pillar of smoke is whirled
Away on the wind, the desire
Of Man, and the joy of his eyes:
A pillar of cloud, and a fire
Burning beneath, and above
Veils that resolve and retire

MORVEN AND THE GRAIL

Into the light, and are gone:
And under the shadow thereof,
Hope awake in the dawn
And Faith as a bird that sings
In the dark, and Love withdrawn,—
Follow, and shall not fly
Beyond the beginning of wings.
Man shall environ the sky
And the sea in the mist of his breath;
In the dust of his deeds he shall lie
Down, and deny his worth,
Falling from death to death—
Rising from birth to birth
Where the wind of his dream is driven—
In Hell as it is on earth,
On earth as it is in Heaven.

CHORUS: ON EARTH

Children of men, march on
Beyond the veil, nor fear
An end of any beauty now begun;
Seeing how all that longs from nothingness
Into desire proclaims
No heaven but to be more, no hell but to be less
Than ye have held most dear.
Therefore dread not to find your ancient flames

*And foras-
much as God
of His own
heart so
imagineth
all things
that they die
and rise
again, there-
fore shall the
earth declare
the glory of
God, world
without end.*

POEMS

Faint in the radiance of a purer sun;
Or at the shrine of human passion, praise
Unwelcome gods, unwillingly adored
 By strange, cold, holy names.
Ye shall not find them. Many are my ways;
 My will is one,
 Saith the Lord.

 He that hath eyes to see,
Let him behold the tide's eternity,
 Under the sway of the moving moon,
Through the huge pulse of ocean swell and swoon,
 Changing unchangingly;
 He that hath ears to hear,
Hearken the birth-cry of the dying year,
When out of nakedness and frozen stone
 Laughs rearsen spring,
Glorified in sweet green and sunlit gold,
With breath of wild virginity, and tune
 Of marriage-merry birds that sing
The coming of the bridegroom to his own
 Once more, even as of old;
And he that hath a heart to understand
 Feel hour by hour the crown of his reward
 Melt from his brow and harden in his hand
 Into a stronger sword:—
Nor doubt nor dream of narrower destinies
Than to return beneath yet undiscovered skies,
 Risen again as the day riseth again,

MORVEN AND THE GRAIL

Reborn as the year is reborn—
Not in some alien heaven prisoned in vain
Where that which hath been man is put to scorn;
But as a traveller may come
With old love and new eyes
To the wonder of his home.

Children of earth, dream on
Beyond your heaven, and dare
Choose your own gold wherewith ye shall be
crowned;
Seeing He also dreams whose dream ye are,
Nor will endure to bound
That vision by the sweep of any nearer star
Than ye have found most fair.
Therefore from faith to faith, from goal to goal
Unfurl the sunward pathway of the soul—
Ever a new horizon calling
Over the crest of the purple hill,
Ever amid the music falling
A melody unremembered still—
Ever to grow, to gain
Wilder joy, wiser pain,
Diviner peace to conquer and defend
By more than mortal strife:—
Life—everlasting life,
World without end.

Amen.

URNS

A new fixed form: Seven lines, in any rhythm, isometric and of not more than four feet; Riming AbacbcA, the first line and the last a Refrain; the Idea (as the name suggests) to Turn upon the recurrence of the Refrain at the end with a different sense from that which it bears at the beginning.

PRELUDE

Only you will understand,
And at last I can be true.
Oh, the ache of self-command,
Hoarded laugh and hidden tear!
Listen now . . . not even for you
Have I words to make it clear,
Only—you will understand!

WHEN THE WEARY WINTER'S GONE

When the weary Winter's gone,
And the birds come back again,
And the tenderness of dawn,
And the hum and pulse of noon,
And the laughter in the rain,—
Is there one to share my June
When the weary Winter's gone?

MISERERE

Ah, God, my strength again!—
Not power nor joy, but these:
The waking without pain,
The ardour for the task,
And in the evening, peace.
Is it so much to ask?
Ah, God, my strength again!

SEQUEL

Love came back to look once more
On the home he long had known:
Found a vine across the door,
Found the fountain foul and dry,
Found the garden overgrown;
Heard at last a tired sigh. . . .
Love came back to look once more.

“NUNC ET LATENTIS . . .”

Gloom, and the sound of your breath;
Longing . . . and then your lips,
And a heart that faltereth,
And the soft surge of your breast—
Then a slow sigh that slips
Into a sob. Then . . . rest,
Gloom—and the sound of your breath.

HOME-COMING

Shrive me of my sins, Dear Heart:
Give me of the Bread and Wine;
Bid the waste and weight depart,
Bid the best in me renew;
By the love that makes you mine,—
By the God that loves in you,
Shrive me of my sins, Dear Heart!

CONGRATULATIONS

How can he know your worth so well
As I, who never loved you, Sweet?
His love shall bind you, and compel
Your heart, his only, to forget
Whose word first taught that heart to beat.
He is the worthier man . . . and yet,
How can he know your worth so well?

WEARINESS

Weariness;
Neither pain
Nor distress,
Nor a sleep
Sought in vain—
Only deep
Weariness.

REVERIE

I am very old to-night,
And my light is burning low.
There is neither dark nor bright
In my seeing; but I see
Only ghosts of long ago
Gazing on me quietly. . . .
I am very old to-night.

A CHARACTER

The heart of life is hid from him:
He has no ear for overtones,
No eye for blended hues or dim.
Therefore he gives a name to each,
Dockets our laughter and our moans,
And hastens forth to judge and teach—
The heart of life is hid from him.

UMBRA

In the night, the heart
 Feels the breath of things;
Gathers sweet or smart
 Where the eyes are blind,
 Where no echo clings.
 In the day, the mind—
In the night, the heart!

IN PASSING

When all the world was gray,
 And all the airs were chill,
And Summer worlds away,
 And senses out of tune—
 You touched me with a thrill
 Of momentary June,
When all the world was gray.

RECALL

Over the wintry sea
 I send my heart to you
To rouse a memory
 Of hill-woods, and sweet rain,
And the old songs we knew,
 And bring you home again
Over the wintry sea.

THE MAKER OF IMAGES



THE MAKER OF IMAGES

Sunbeam and storm-cloud over the wonderful
Sea, whereupon ships labour and mariners
 Hope and despair, while safe in haven
Weavers of dream by the wayside wander

Whose hands know not the oar, nor their eyes endure
Insurgent ocean. Nevertheless, they live
 Not vainly, if at heart their dreams be
One with the heart of the world forever.

Long since, an unknown Maker of Images
Walked where the shore looms high before Pergamon
 Fronting the sea. And while he dreamed there,
Suddenly over the bright horizon

Fell darkness. Birds cried out, flying heavily
Down the wind. Blue gloom, swallowing sail by sail,
 Swung landward. The tall meadow-grasses
Swayed like the mane of a beast in anger

Arousing. . . . Then one glare, and a thunderbolt
Cracked, and the world went out into colourless
 Ruin of rain, and sky and headland
Blent with the spray of the plunging ocean.

POEMS

Meanwhile, amazed, the Maker of Images
Clung to the cliff. Then rose; and at eventide,
Through dew-sweet fields and rain-washed wood-
land
Wandered, as one having seen a vision,

Homeward, without speech. And for many days
Carved on the new-raised altar of Pergamon
What he had seen: yet not the unmeaning
Welter of cloud over storm-torn water,

But warfare of white gods, the Olympians,
Against the Earth-Born: Zeus, thunder-panoplied,
Pallas, and Ares, and Poseidon
Ranging the van of his windy legions,—

While underneath, vain Giants in agony
Piled mountains; and alone, understanding all,
Foam-bosomed Aphrodite smiled down
Quietly, out of the heights above them.

Storms pass. Untold suns, glooms beyond numbering,
Vanish. The unchanging pageant elaborates,
And kingdoms fail, and strange commanders
Govern imperial generations

THE MAKER OF IMAGES

Of momentary dust; and the pyramid
Follows the prince where, emulous, tremulous,
 Like motes along the moonbeam dancing
Into the dark, the Enchanter changes

Men, and the deeds of men. Yet through centuries
Gone, since before that altar, adoringly
 With arms upraised, the Pergamaeans
Gazed, and grew stronger of heart beholding,

Their dreams remain. Still, still, as a thousand years
Embody June, so now and forevermore
 New lamps, new eyes, one light undying
Hold, and reveal in a thousand rainbows.

All gods of all times fight for us, laugh with us;
Forgotten angels cool our delirium;
 Vague monsters from primeval caverns
Widen the wondering eyes of children;

And knights of old, high-hearted adventurers,
Ride errant with us, making a tournament
 Of toil; and new-hung moons remember
Passion and pang of imagined lovers

Whose perfumed souls in blossomy silences
Hunger, forlorn: Adonis, Endymion,
 Brynhild, Elaine, Ysolde, Helen,—
Names like the touch of the lips that loved them,—

POEMS

And brazen-handed heroes who sang as they
Charged home against impregnable destiny
 Clang trumpets in our wars; and saints leave
Lilies of peace by the lonely highway.

Pray therefore that, ourselves being treasurers
Of beauty brought from Eden, ephemeral
 Husbands of ageless Dawn, our dreams too
Mould for a moment the gold immortal

Not fouled by unclean hands, nor unworthily
Shapen for gain; nor scorned, while idolaters
 Of deities unborn unwisely
Gather barbarian toys of tinsel

To flatter purblind eyes. But remembering
The beautiful old gods, and the champions
 Of storied wars, and sylvan horn-calls
Waking mysterious elfin laughter,—

We, in our own hour Makers of Images,
Charm storm and day-dream into such harmony
 As men of deeds, beholding, long for,
Forging the world into forms of heaven.

New York, 1914.

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